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360Zine

Issue 37 | December 2009

Free Magazine For Xbox 360 Gamers. *Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...*

EXCLUSIVE!



Mass Effect 2

Game Of The Year 2010? Read our huge hands-on preview to find out



REVIEWED!



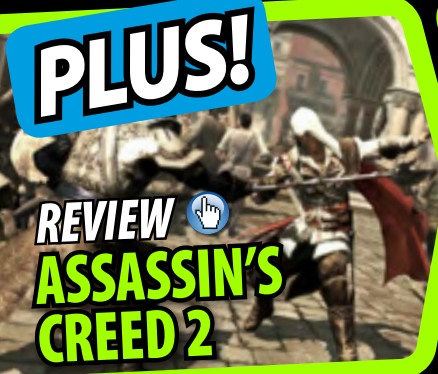
Modern Warfare 2

*The biggest game of all time.
The only review you need*



PLUS!

REVIEW
ASSASSIN'S CREED 2



REVIEW



GTA: THE BALLAD OF GAY TONY



PREVIEW



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2



PREVIEW



AVATAR



REVIEW



BORDERLANDS



CONTROL →





Welcome to 360Zine



It's always the busiest month of the gaming calendar, and this November is no different. We've got the definitive verdicts on the year's biggest two games: Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 and Assassin's Creed 2, along with our view on the final part of the GTA IV saga, The Ballad of Gay Tony.

And in the relentless march that is the videogame industry, it's already time to look beyond tinsel and baubles and into some of next year's offerings. Before you know it, you'll be waist deep in the intrigue and drama of Mass Effect 2, and Christmas will seem like a distant memory.

So why not start the excitement now, and turn to our massive hands-on preview with next year's most sought-after RPG? Why not indeed. Enjoy the issue.

**360Zine
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
the new issue

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
360zine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

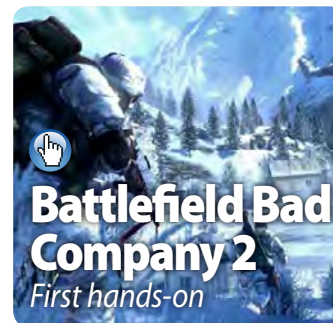
Probably the best
games writers on
the planet



Jon Denton
Jon is staying away
from Russian airports
in the future

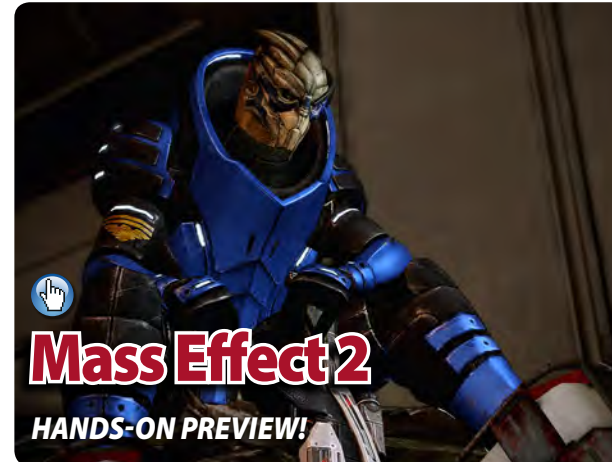


**David
Scammell**
David's tearing up the
Battlefield with glee



**Battlefield Bad
Company 2**
First hands-on

Don't miss! *This month's top highlights*



Mass Effect 2

HANDS-ON PREVIEW!



Modern Warfare 2

The full review



EA Sports MMA

Brutal preview



Assassin's Creed 2

Blades of glory

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Super Street Fighter IV | Avatar Modern Warfare 2 |
| Front Mission Evolved | Assassin's Creed 2 |
| Resonance of Fate | GTA IV: The Ballad of Gay Tony |
| Mass Effect 2 | Gay Tony Borderlands |
| EA MMA | |

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We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.





PlayStation
Network

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

20.11.09

"IN A WORD, INSTABUY"

VG247

"THE MOST ANTICIPATED
GAME OF THE YEAR"

ZOO



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

18

www.pegi.info

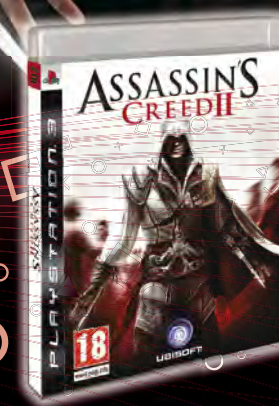


UBISOFT



PS3

PlayStation 3

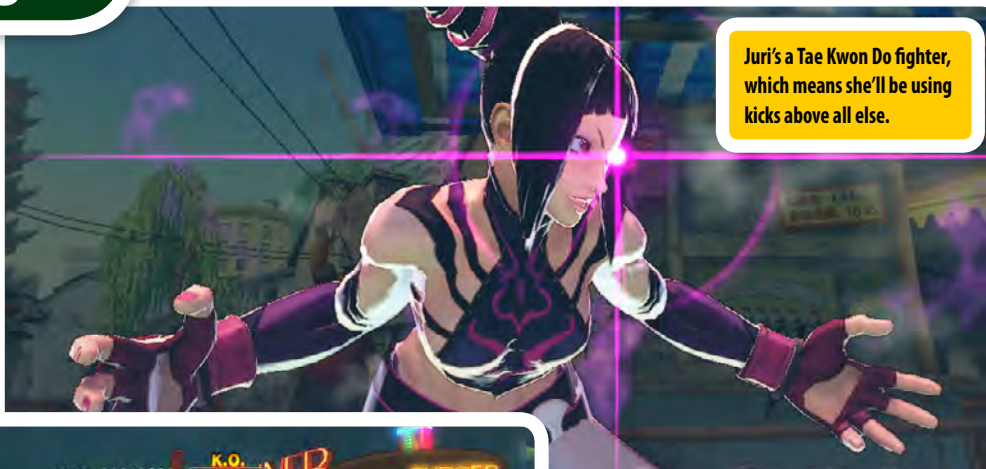


CONTROL →





Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Heritage: SFIV
Link: www.streetfighter.com
ETA: Spring



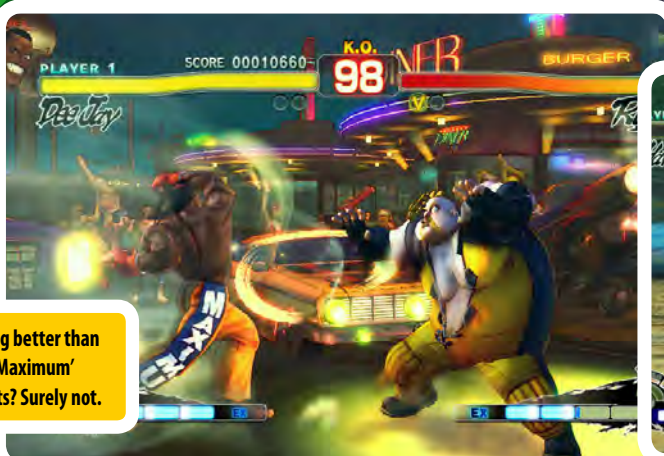
Juri's a Tae Kwon Do fighter, which means she'll be using kicks above all else.

FIRST LOOK

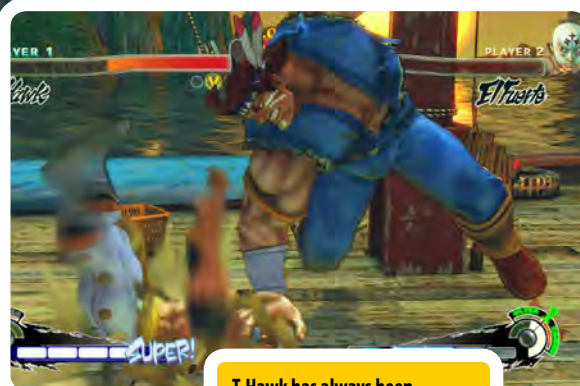
Super Street Fighter IV

Last night a DeeJay saved my life

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what you
think of Super
Street Fighter IV



Is anything better than DeeJay's 'Maximum' track pants? Surely not.



T-Hawk has always been stupidly strong, and surprisingly quick. Could be a favourite guy for the Zangief crowd.

"Eight brand-new characters join an already sizeable player roster"

Didn't SFIV just come out?

Well yes, but it's not like this hasn't happened before. There's never been a Street Fighter game that hasn't been iterated upon, and it seems Street Fighter IV will be no different. So, just over a year after the original tore up Xbox Live and turned a new generation on to the joy of arcade sticks, so its sequel is coming to do the same.

What's so Super about it?

The most obvious change comes in the form of eight brand-new characters who join an already sizeable roster. In fact, brand-new probably isn't the best description – of the three newbies currently announced, two will be very familiar to anyone who's followed Street Fighter since the mid-nineties. Yes, that's right, the hulking native American T-Hawk and the always-risque DeeJay are back in full effect,

constructed out of those same chunky three-dimensional lumps that make the Street Fighter IV posse look so good.

Who's the other character?

Joining T-Hawk and DeeJay is Juri, a genuinely new addition to Street Fighter lore. She's a Korean Tae Kwon Do fighter – a first for the series – so expect a lot of kicks and very little else. Fans are already making bets as to who the other five combatants will be, but the smart money is on Street Fighter III's British boxer Dudley, and hopefully the giant wrestler Hugo. We shall see.

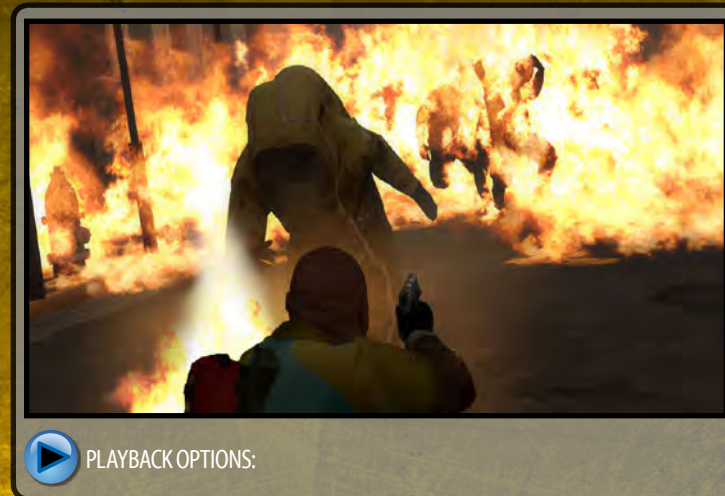
Anything else to declare?

It's going to come in at a cheaper price point too. Bonus!



LEFT 4 DEAD 2

L4D.COM



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

NEW FRIENDS. MORE ZOMBIES.
BETTER APOCALYPSE

get infected Nov 20th

VALVE

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XBOX 360

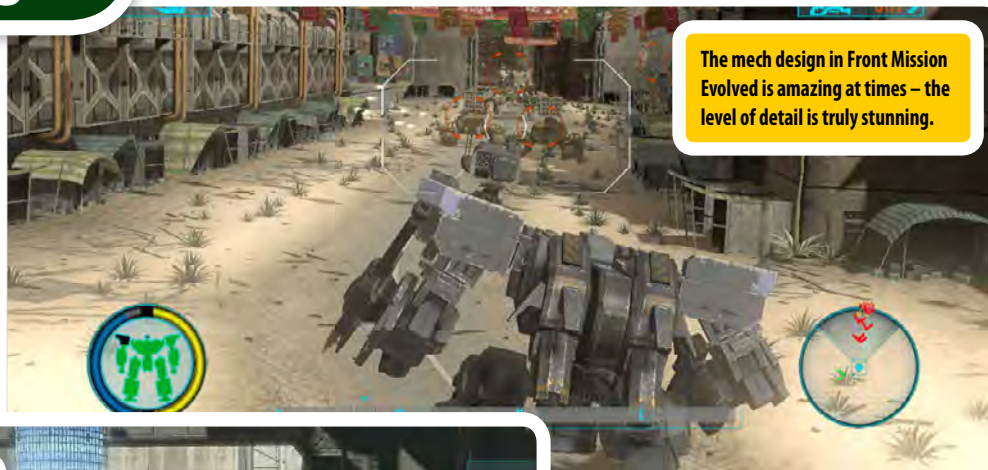
XBOX LIVE

PC
DVD
ROM



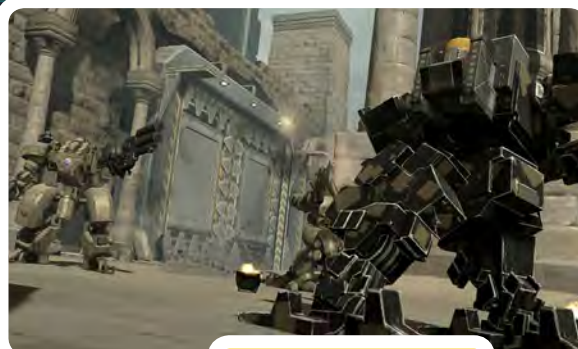
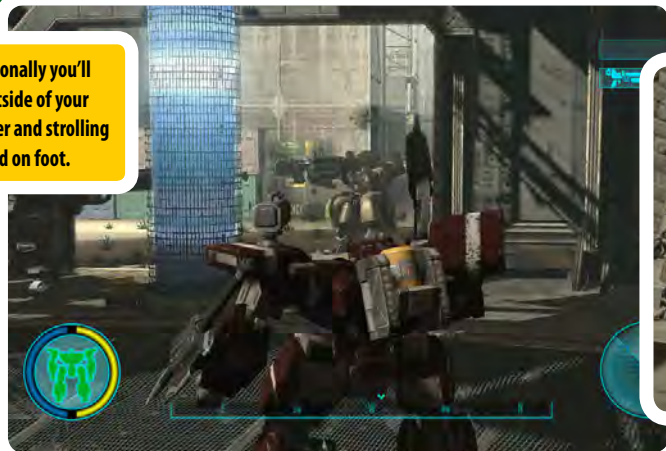
FRONT MISSION
EVOLVED

Publisher: Square-Enix
Developer: Double Helix
Heritage: Silent Hill:
Homecoming
Link: [http://na.
frontmissionevolved.com](http://na.frontmissionevolved.com)
ETA: Summer 2010



The mech design in Front Mission Evolved is amazing at times – the level of detail is truly stunning.

Occasionally you'll be outside of your Wanzer and strolling around on foot.



You'll know if you're interested in Front Mission Evolved just by looking at this screenshot. Do you love giant robots as if they were your real friends? Then get involved.

"Front Mission Evolved is the first sequel to try to gain proper attention in Europe"

FIRST LOOK

Front Mission Evolved

This is a Wanzer attack

What exactly is Front Mission Evolved?

If you've even a passing interest in giant robots (and who doesn't?) then you'll be well aware of Double Helix's massively popular series, where you control lumbering, slow mech tanks and drive them into battle against other, similarly lumbering beasts. Front Mission Evolved is the latest sequel, and the first one that's really trying to gain proper attention in Europe.

So how is it going to manage that?

Well, knowing that slow, tactical big robot games don't exactly appeal to that many people in the West, Double Helix has injected a much-needed dose of pace and personality into its latest Front Mission. The tanks – known hilariously as Wanzers – are nippy, sharing more in common with the suits in Lost Planet than, say, Mechwarrior. They can glide across the ground and even fly at times, making the whole thing feel much more like a typical console shooter, which is probably a good thing.

Completely dumbed down then?

Yes and no. It's more accessible, but not dumbed-down as such. Customisation, the key to the Front Mission games, is still a massive part of Evolved. There are four customisable weapon slots on your Wanzer (that just sounds ridiculous), along with fully upgradeable skill trees. Ultimately, the joy of building and maintaining a unique mech hasn't gone anywhere, it's just been incorporated into the type of game that almost anyone can get hold of and enjoy.

Anything else to declare?

Don't go expecting a science fiction classic, as it's probably best to ignore the cut-scenes and dialogue when it comes to Front Mission Evolved. There's too much hardcore Wanzer action to be getting on with for all that nonsense.

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to tell
us what you
think of Front
Mission Evolved



"THIS YEAR'S,
PERHAPS THE DECADE'S,
MOST ANTICIPATED GAME"

— OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

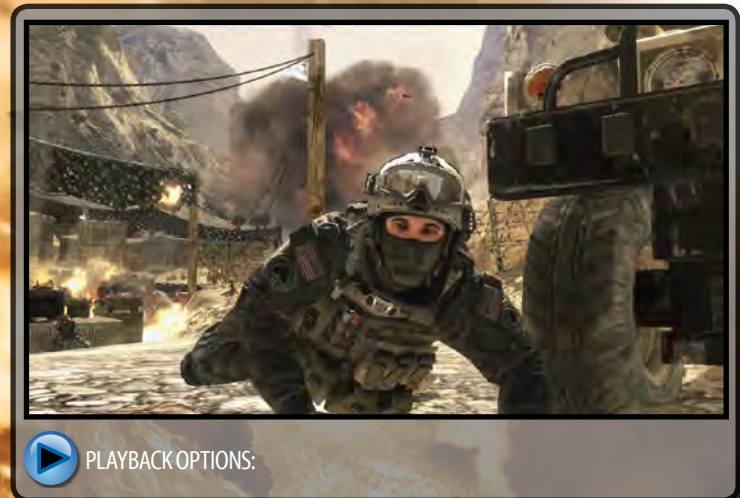


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Jump in.

XBOX 360.



RESONANCE OF FATE

Publisher: SEGA

Developer: Tri-Ace

Heritage: Star Ocean,

Link: <http://eoe.sega.jp>

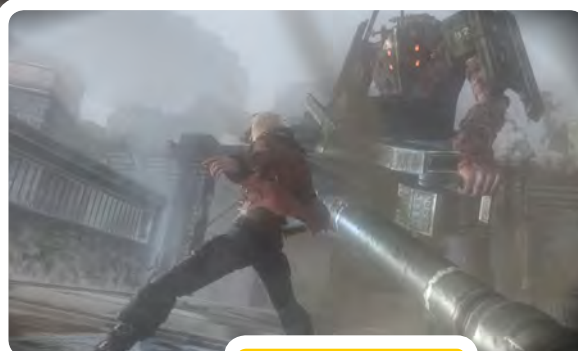
ETA: Spring 2010



Zephyr looks like Dante and thinks he can move like Dante. The influences are clear.



Battles involve real-time movement, but turn-based attacks. Could be interesting.



There's a more adult look to Resonance Of Fate than Tri-Ace's other output. Hopefully the quality of the voice work will match up to the visual stylings.

"Resonance of Fate is an action-RPG from the team behind Star Ocean and Valkyria"



FIRST LOOK

Resonance of Fate

When is an RPG not an RPG?

So what does that name actually mean?

Well, of course, it's about how destiny tends to vibrate at a certain frequency... yeah, we don't know either. Nobody knows. It's just another collection of cool-sounding words that always seem to find their way onto the cover of JRPG boxes. And here we have it. Despite the generic name, though, Resonance of Fate is actually a pretty interesting prospect. It's an action-RPG from the team behind Star Ocean and the Valkyria series, and looks a cut above your typical RPG fare.

How so, exactly?

Tri-Ace have prided themselves on actually innovating in a pretty tired genre. They're not satisfied just churning out archaic turn-based battle systems, so Resonance of Fate allows players to move in real-time during combat sequences, which is fairly significant news. From there, the fighters do take turns to attack, but the whole thing is fluid and attractive, echoing the 'gun-kata' stylings of a movie like Equilibrium. So, while it's not a full-on combat onslaught like Devil May Cry or Bayonetta, Resonance of Fate is still a far more engaging and immediate experience than traditional RPGs.

What about the story?

You play as Zephyr, a man so ridden with angst and self-loathing that he believes that his own existence is evidence enough that God doesn't exist. Zephyr teams up with Vashyron, the leader of a private military company who contracts our hero to help out with his struggle against the oppressive regime in the sky-city of Bazel. Yeah, it's not that interesting to be honest.

Anything else to declare?

The pedigree behind this should ensure its status in the top-tier of JRPGs.

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
Resonance of Fate

[illegible]

the Pandemic logo and Electronic Arts Inc. in the bottom right corner. The PlayStation logo is also visible.

eagames.co.uk/thesaboteur
4TH DECEMBER





Publisher: EA
Developer: BioWare
Heritage: KOTOR, Dragon Age Origins, Mass Effect
Link: <http://masseffect.bioware.com>
ETA: January 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of Mass Effect 2

HANDS ON

Mass Effect 2

Shepard's delight?

"It's about bringing along a squad of the most badass operatives in the galaxy, so you can overcome what might otherwise become a suicide mission." Or so says Dr. Ray Muzyka, CEO of BioWare and Group General Manager of the RPG and MMO team at EA. And he should know, as his team at BioWare has spent the over two years honing one of the most sought after sequels in RPG console history.

It's those words though ('Badass operatives') that send tingling doubt down the spine. Coupled with the Subject Zero teaser trailers, is Mass Effect 2 in danger of dumbing down and pandering to the shooter-hungry masses? In a word, no. After finally getting hands-on time with both Mass Effect 2's combat and conversational mechanics, there's very little to worry about at all. In fact, it's about time you got very, very excited indeed.

Our demo took place in one of the galaxy's seedier nightspots, where drunken revellers gawp at gyrating Asari while dark techno hums through the sound system. You see, even

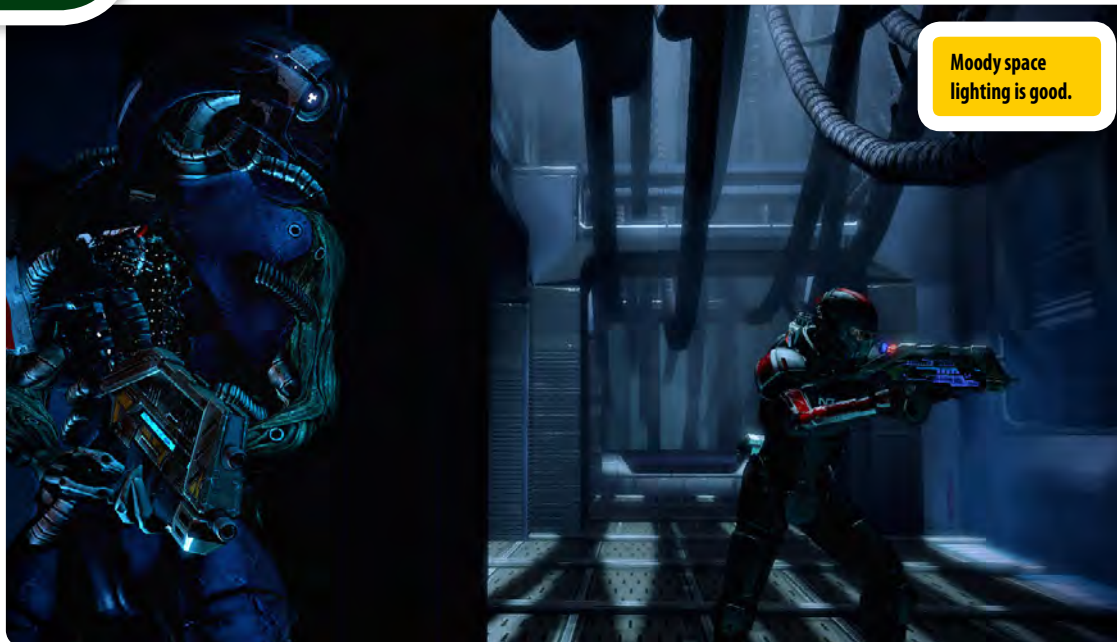


"It's about time you got very, very excited indeed"

Combat is just so much better this time around. Instead of feeling apologetic, it's a full-on balls-out blast.

Why so serious?

MASS
EFFECT



Moody space
lighting is good.



Recognise his
ugly mug?

> Mass Effect 2 continued

though Shepard is trying to work out why humans are disappearing all over the galaxy, and what the malevolent alien race The Collectors have to do with it, he's still got time for a shot and a bit of, um, recreation.

He's there to speak to an Asari woman, but in truth it's more a chance for BioWare to show off its enhanced character modelling and cut-scene direction. Remember how the original's visuals popped in over the space of 30 seconds every time a new scene began? Not any more. Remember how characters would stand bolt upright and deliver their lines at each others' vacant faces? Nope, all that's changed.

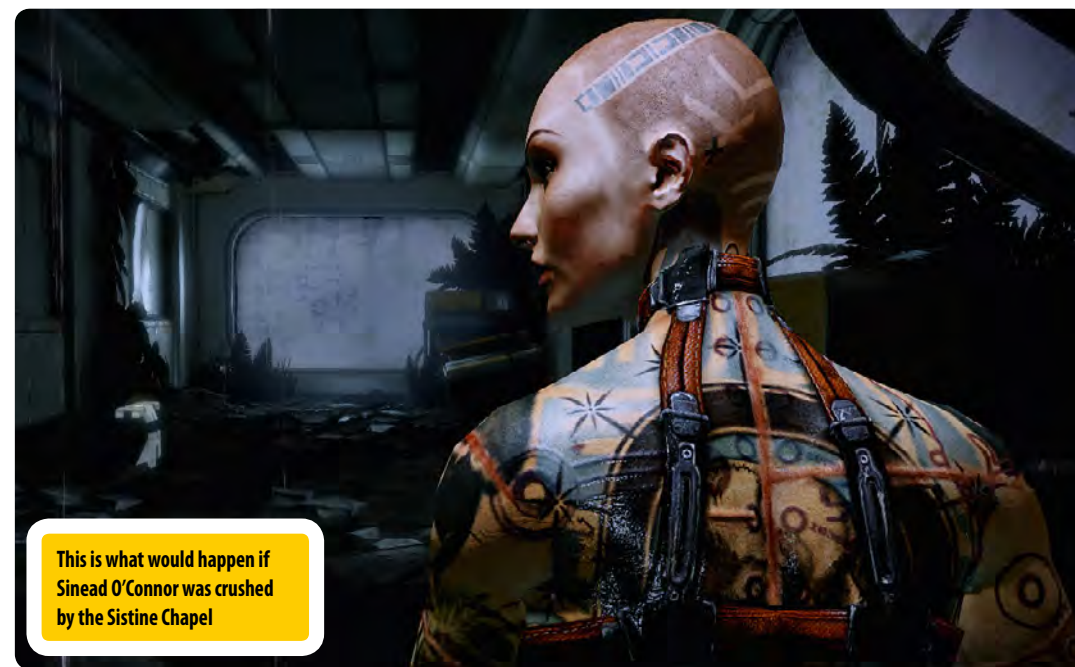
The game really looks the part, and when you're neck deep in space-

**"Shepard is trying to
work out why humans
are disappearing all
over the galaxy"**

banter, characters move around, sit down, stand up, even exchange subtle glances and expressions. It serves to draw players deeper into the world of what Muzyka is calling 'the dark second act of the Mass Effect trilogy'.

Even though the setting is ostentatiously gritty, there's a tone to Mass Effect 2 that matches the edgier moments from the first game. It comes from the music, the lighting, even the delivery of the dialogue. These are the types of techniques that skilled

>



This is what would happen if
Sinead O'Connor was crushed
by the Sistine Chapel

MASS
EFFECT



Man vs robot.
Always a good fight.



Hmm... space
sick. Interesting.

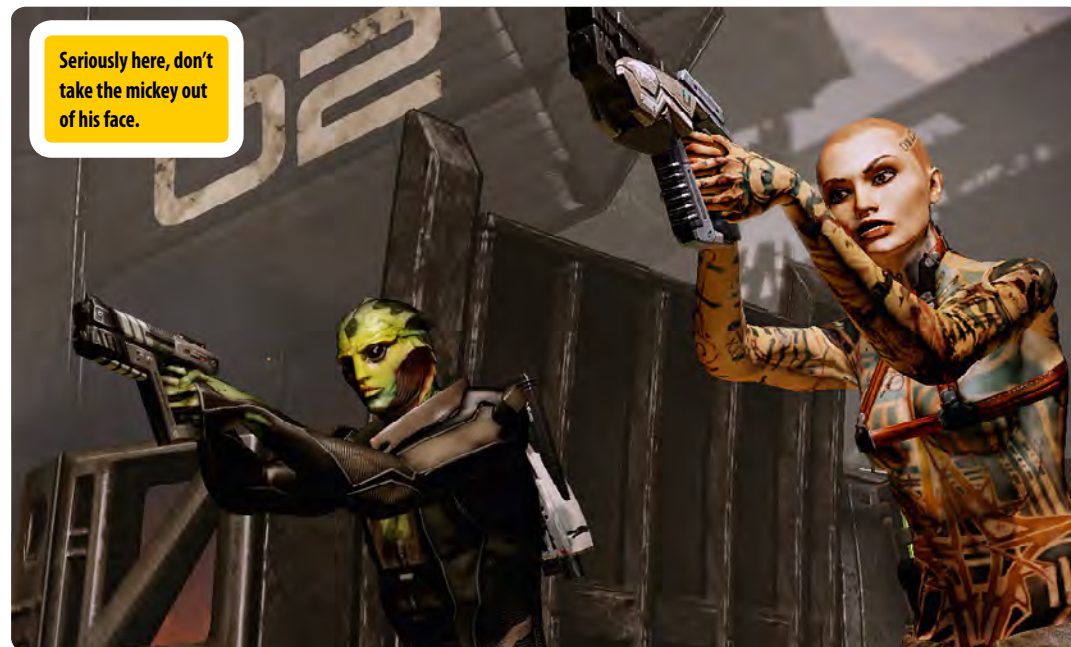
> Mass Effect 2 continued

film-makers have used for years to build otherworldly universes, and BioWare has done great work in mimicking and

even expanding on such welcome stylistic choices.

Of course, with this being a demo and Mass Effect 2 being 'as much a shooter as a role playing game' –

Seriously here, don't
take the mickey out
of his face.



**"Placing a few sniper
shots into the head
of a robot aggressor
left him slumped over
a barricade"**

Muzyka, again – it's really not not long before we're crouched behind a wall with an assault rifle in our hands, ready to do battle.

Immediately, the changes in combat are apparent. For starters, there's so much more precision in your aiming, so you feel less like you're throwing handfuls of shells at a wall, and more like you're accurately selecting and dispatching targets. Perhaps the biggest improvement though, is in the way the enemies take damage. Placing

a few sniper shots into the head of a robotic aggressor left him slumped over a barricade, wires shorting and fizzing as it died a painful digital death. This is the type of feedback that all the great shooters give players. It was only a brief shootout – although one that thrust a grenade launcher into



Well, he clearly doesn't have
a problem with tattoos.

MASS
EFFECT

Space shooters like Halo have clearly been an influence in the graphics department.



Excited? Us?
Well, just a bit.

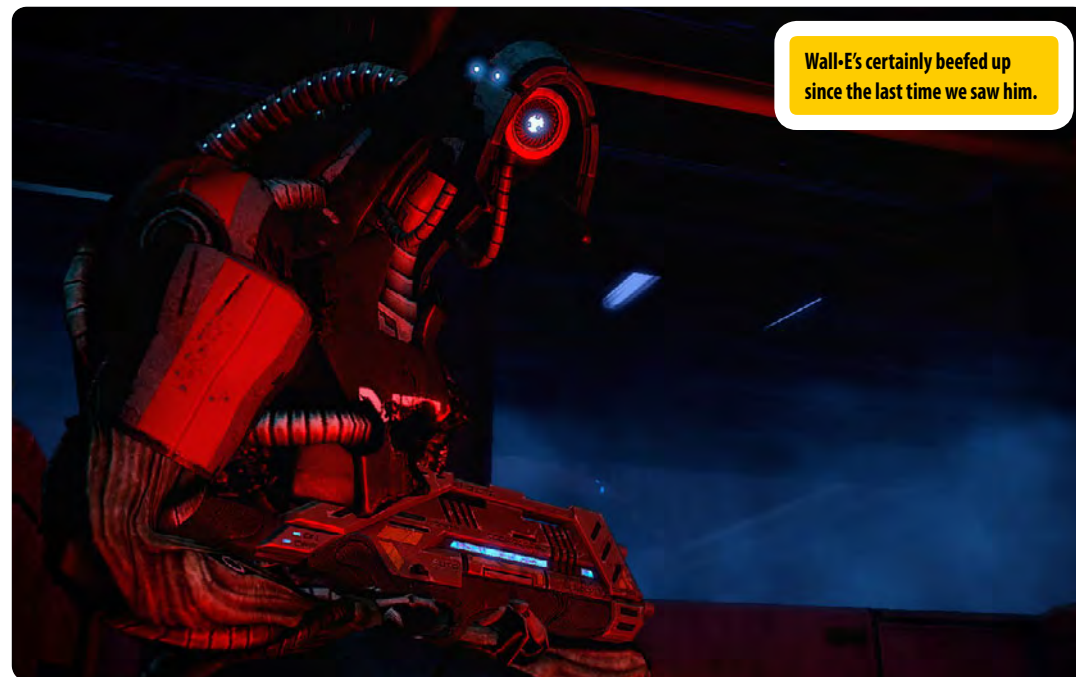
> Mass Effect 2 continued

Shepard's hands – but a very promising one. Battles no longer feel like a compromise, but an integral, enjoyable part of the experience.

In fact, every aspect of Mass Effect 2 has been cranked up in an attempt to really capitalise on the potential of the first game. It's not difficult to decipher

BioWare's philosophy here – the Canadian RPG supremos are trying to make their own Empire Strikes Back.

"We've really amped up the intensity of the experience across the board, both the shooter and the role-playing aspects of the game," Muzyka excitedly explains. "We have really precise controls on the battlefield with tactical depth, and it



Wall-E's certainly beefed up since the last time we saw him.

really feels incredibly precise as you're shooting, and with the role-playing aspects, we're not losing anything on those things either. We have an amazing experience with incredible depth and customisation, progression, exploration and combat, and I think fans are going to have an amazing time. There's nothing else quite like Mass Effect 2 out there; it's an truly amazing experience".

Normally such PR hyperbole would have us reaching for earplugs, but it's tough not to get swept along with the

passion and enthusiasm of the BioWare guys. It's infectious. This is a labour of love, a game Muzyka himself has called "perhaps the best title that BioWare has ever worked on," and quite possibly the finest piece of science fiction yet seen on a games console.

So allay those worries, silence those doubts and make sure you haven't wiped your save from the original game, because Mass Effect will be here sooner than you think. It's time to dust off those space fatigues and get on with saving the universe. ●

360Zine

MASS
EFFECT

HOW COMPLETE?

90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

Game Of The Year 2010? Could be...



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*Any reference to instruments - Guitars, Drums, or Microphones - refers to Guitar Hero controllers.
Online features not available on PlayStation[®]2

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activision.com



CONTROL →





Publisher: EA
 Developer: EA Tiburon
 Heritage: Madden NFL
 Link: <http://mma.easports.com>
 ETA: 2010

REVEALED

EA Sports MMA

The new king of the cage?

It's been a monumental few weeks for EA Sports MMA. In a very short space of time, it has gone from a very hush-hush project with only one screenshot and a whole lot of conjecture to being one of the most commercially important games in American sporting circles.

You see, EA Sports MMA has just signed a significant sponsorship deal with the UFC's main rival, Strikeforce, and as such, saw its logo plastered all

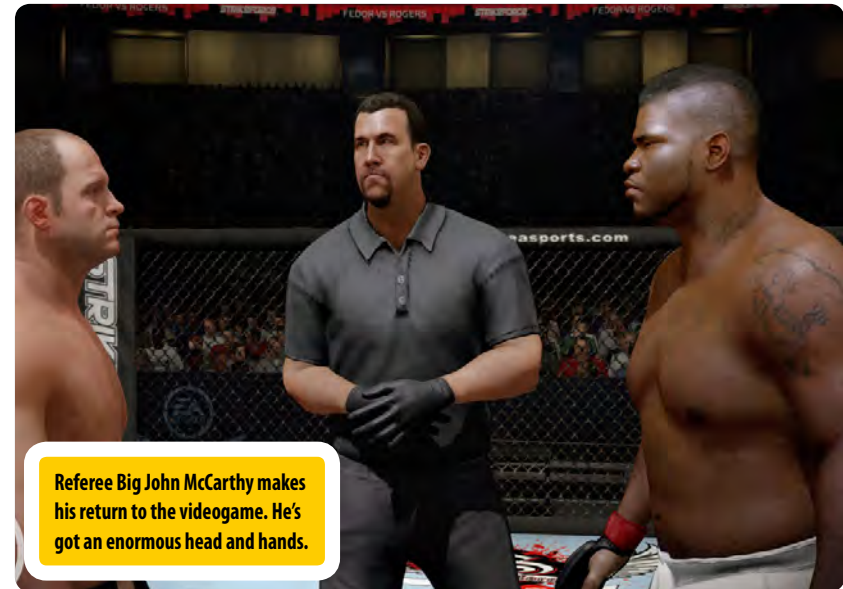


over the mat, cage and both fighters during the main event of the most-watched MMA fight of all time, Fedor Emilianenko vs Bret Rogers. Be under no illusion, this game means business, in more ways than one.

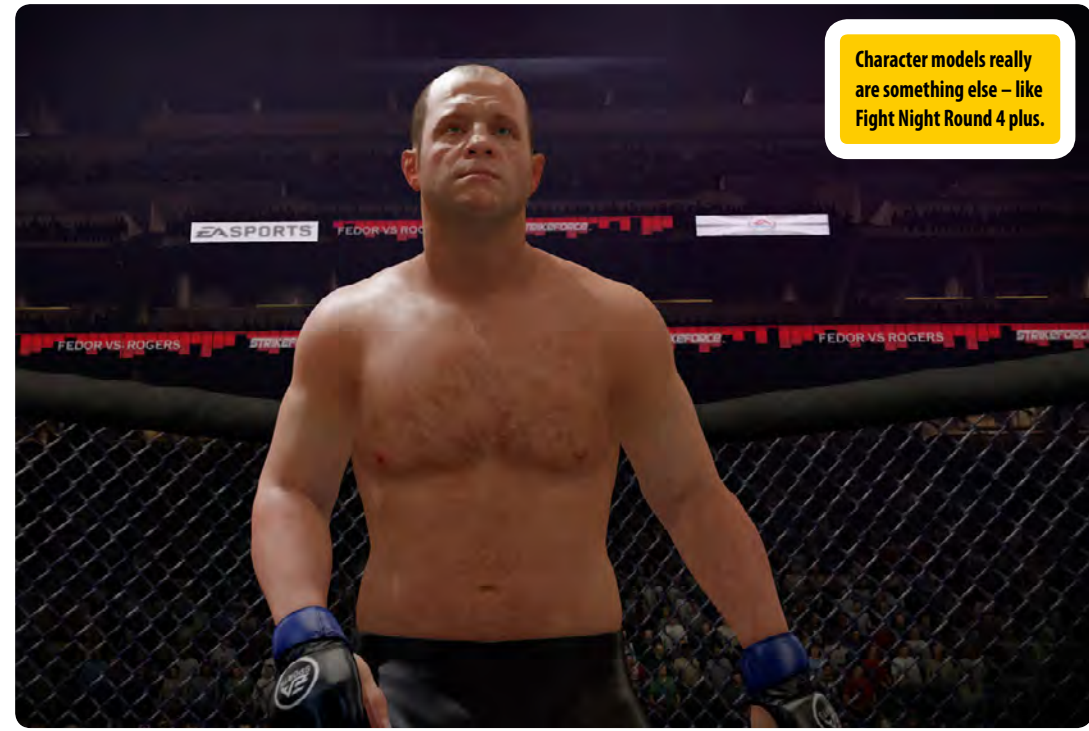
At the recent EA Showcase, the guys from EA Tiburon were kind enough to show a lengthy and in-depth demo of what fight fans can expect from this new grappler. It's covering the same ground as UFC Undisputed, of course, so it has a tough act to follow. Within seconds of seeing Fedor bouncing up on the balls of his feet, throwing feints at Bret Rogers, though, this already feels like a step up from THQ's effort.

The Fight Night Round 4 engine returns in modified form, and you can tell, as the character models are stunning. Not only do Fedor and Rogers look *exactly* like their real-life counterparts – even down to Fedor's infamous head scar – but they move just as you'd expect, too.

"It's covering the same ground as UFC Undisputed, but already feels like a step-up from THQ's effort"



Referee Big John McCarthy makes his return to the videogame. He's got an enormous head and hands.



Character models really are something else – like Fight Night Round 4 plus.



> EA Sports MMA cont.

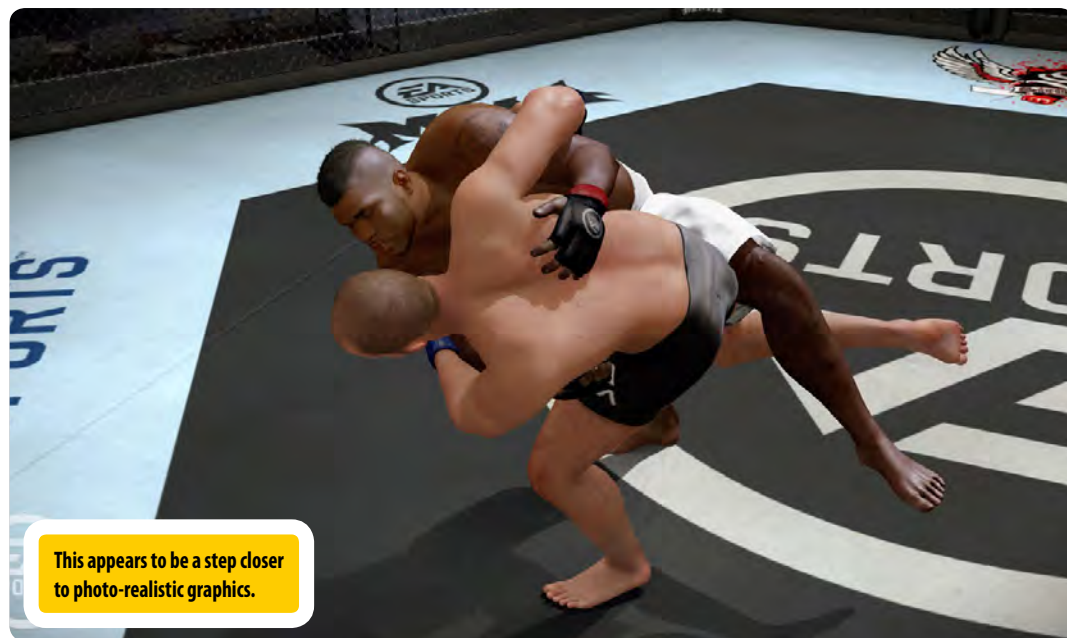
Even though both fighters are heavyweights, there's a noticeable difference in how they move and how they stand. Fedor is quick and nimble, bouncing on his toes and throwing looping strikes with speed. Rogers, however, has his feet planted for power, and if one of his punches connects, his opponent's going to know about it. Just look at Fedor's broken nose from the real fight.

Instead of focusing solely on the core disciplines of Mixed Martial Arts – Muay Thai, Jiu Jitsu, boxing and wrestling – EA Tiburon is making sure every fighter moves and competes just as they would do in real life. For the

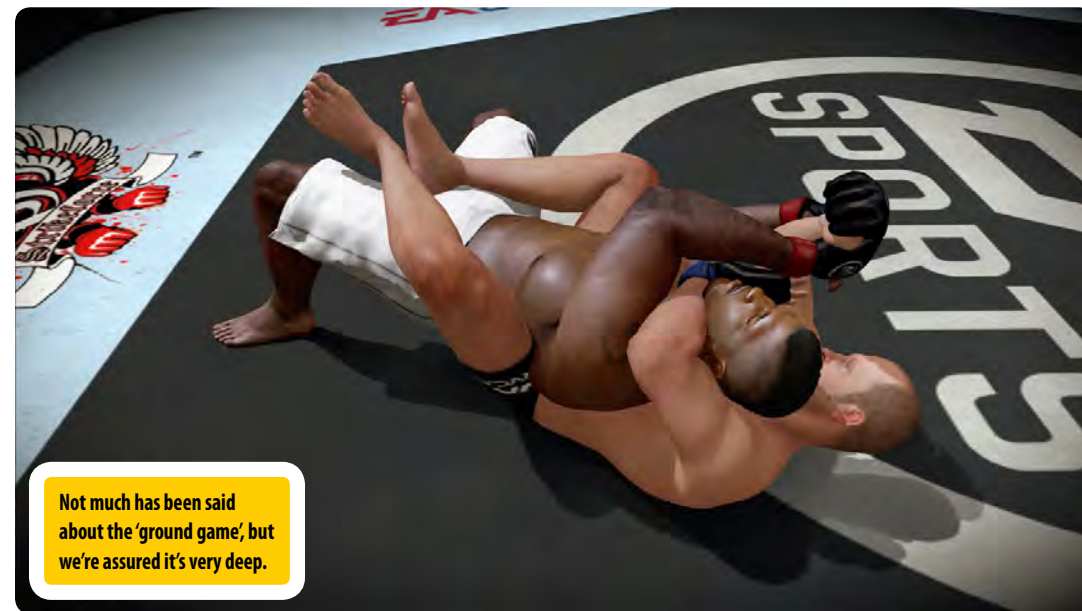
uninitiated, this means a far greater variety in the types of attacks that are available, but for the hardcore MMA fan, it's like a dream.

Our demo mainly focused on foot movement and standing strikes, so there's not much to discuss on the toughest part of the sport to recreate (the ground game) but we do now know that EA Sports MMA will be heavily based around the right stick.

Like Fight Night, punches will be thrown using specific right-stick motions, as opposed to UFC's Tekken-like button-based approach, and kicks too will be thrown with the appropriate motions of your right thumb. As with Fight Night, EA Sports MMA bases its damage around physics, so if you're



This appears to be a step closer to photo-realistic graphics.



Not much has been said about the 'ground game', but we're assured it's very deep.

caught charging in with your chin exposed and your opponent lands a meaty hook to the jaw, expect to be visiting the canvas... or a doctor.

So, in the cage things are already looking promising, but what about the key stumbling block, the obvious elephant in the room? This sport is synonymous with the letters U, F and C, and without that license EA Sports MMA could struggle. Instead of trying to disguise that though, EA is going all out, with guarantees that players will be fighting in every major MMA

promotion around the world, and even in a ring as well as a cage.

Could this be the knockout blow to THQ's fledgling franchise? ●



Fedor is a submissions master. Wait for the snap!

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
EA Sports
MMA

360Zine



HOW COMPLETE?

70%

Packing a serious punch

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

80%



WHAT DIDN'T KILL ME
PREPARED ME FOR WHAT'S COMING.



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



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XBOX 360

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CONTROL →



JAMES CAMERON'S
AVATAR
THE GAME

Publisher: Ubisoft.

Developer:

Ubisoft Montreal

Heritage: Splinter Cell,
GRAVLink: www.avatar
moviegame.com

ETA: 4th December

HANDS ON

James Cameron's Avatar: The Game

Gaming enters the third dimension

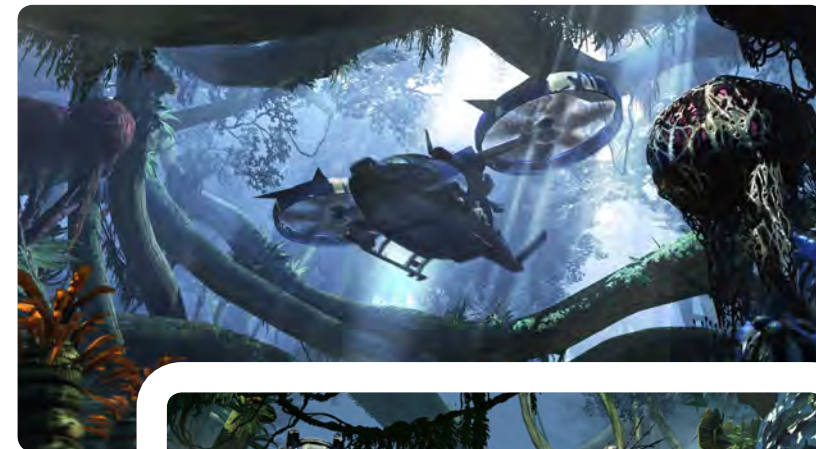
By now, you've probably seen the trailer for James Cameron's 3D opus, the laudably ambitious Avatar, but you may not be aware of the videogame tie-in. After a strong showing at this year's E3 (on a 103-inch 3D plasma screen, no less), 360Zine has now been fortunate enough to spend extensive hands-on time in the bizarre alien world of Pandora. And it's a very strange place indeed.

Ubisoft Montreal has worked closely with 20th Century Fox and Cameron

himself to ensure that the gorgeous flora and utterly fantastical fauna from the world of Avatar has been brought to life. Certainly, after a brief but underwhelming tutorial sequence that'll probably only make sense after seeing the movie, we're thrust into the shoes of a very capable soldier, and into one of the most deceptively hostile game worlds yet conceived.

Deceptive, because it looks so damn lovely. There's a vibrancy to the greens and blues that highlight almost everything you see, but behind the beauty lies serious danger. Fellow soldiers warn of plants that can take off limbs, and that's before you encounter the wolf-life enemies of the opening battle. Let alone the giant Elephant/Rhino/Alien/nightmare that ended up killing us.

From a purely functional point of view, Avatar is a Gears of War-style cover shooter, with the appropriate amount of rolling about on the floor, >



Shooting is the staple diet of Avatar. It's all a bit Gears of War, to be honest. Not a bad thing, of course.



It's a strikingly attractive game at times, mainly because it's all so weird.



> Avatar: The Game cont.

sliding behind low walls and firing at anything that moves. Even in the early stages though, it feels like it has a touch more class than some of the ropier Gears wannabes of recent years. Aside from the visuals, which are indeed lovely, there's a good weight to the characters, and the weapons feel meaty enough to puncture holes in alien-animal torsos.

It's the exploration side of Avatar that sets it apart from the pack, though. An early mission asks you to take command of a slightly unwieldy buggy, and hurtle through the jungle to fix some communication beacons.

Nothing new there then, but it's what you see on the way that makes it interesting. If you're not distracted by the plant-life that's doing everything in its power to kill you, then taking a wrong turn and finding yourself face-to-face with the aforementioned Rhino-beast is enough to awaken even the most cynical shooter fan. We're not going to lie to you folks, it was a genuinely scary experience.

And if it's fear you're after, then surely the myriad 3D options can only enhance an already oddly unsettling experience. Basically, if you're one of the few people on the planet to actually own a 3D-compatible TV, then Avatar supports almost any mode you



The plant life on Pandora can be as dangerous as the animals. Like hypercolour Venus fly traps.

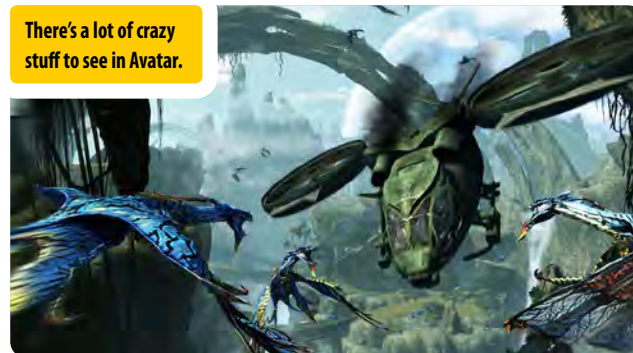


could care to mention. Reports from E3 suggest the results are spectacular.

As with any game that throws so much at you in its early stages, there's the fear that it won't maintain the pace, and while Avatar's shooting is stronger than say, Terminator Salvation's, it isn't going to challenge Gears or GTA in the low-walled battle stakes. It's all about variety. If Ubisoft Montreal, and indeed the visionaries behind the movie, can throw enough interesting sights and scenarios our way, then Avatar will

definitely earn the right to call itself a movie tie-in with substance. Until then, we'll be living in fear of the Rhino-beast. He's in our dreams now. ●

There's a lot of crazy stuff to see in Avatar.



**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to tell us what you think of Avatar: The Game



HOW COMPLETE?

90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

70%

Better than many would have expected



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*"AlloDs Online has the potential to
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genre that struggles to innovate"*
(Videogamer.com, August 2009)



gPotato **ASTRUM NIVAL**

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**PC
ONLINE**



BATTLEFIELD
BAD COMPANY 2

Publisher: EA

Developer: DICE

Heritage: Battlefield: Bad
Company, Mirror's EdgeLink: [http://battlefield.com/
badcompany2](http://battlefield.com/badcompany2)

ETA: 5th March

HANDS ON

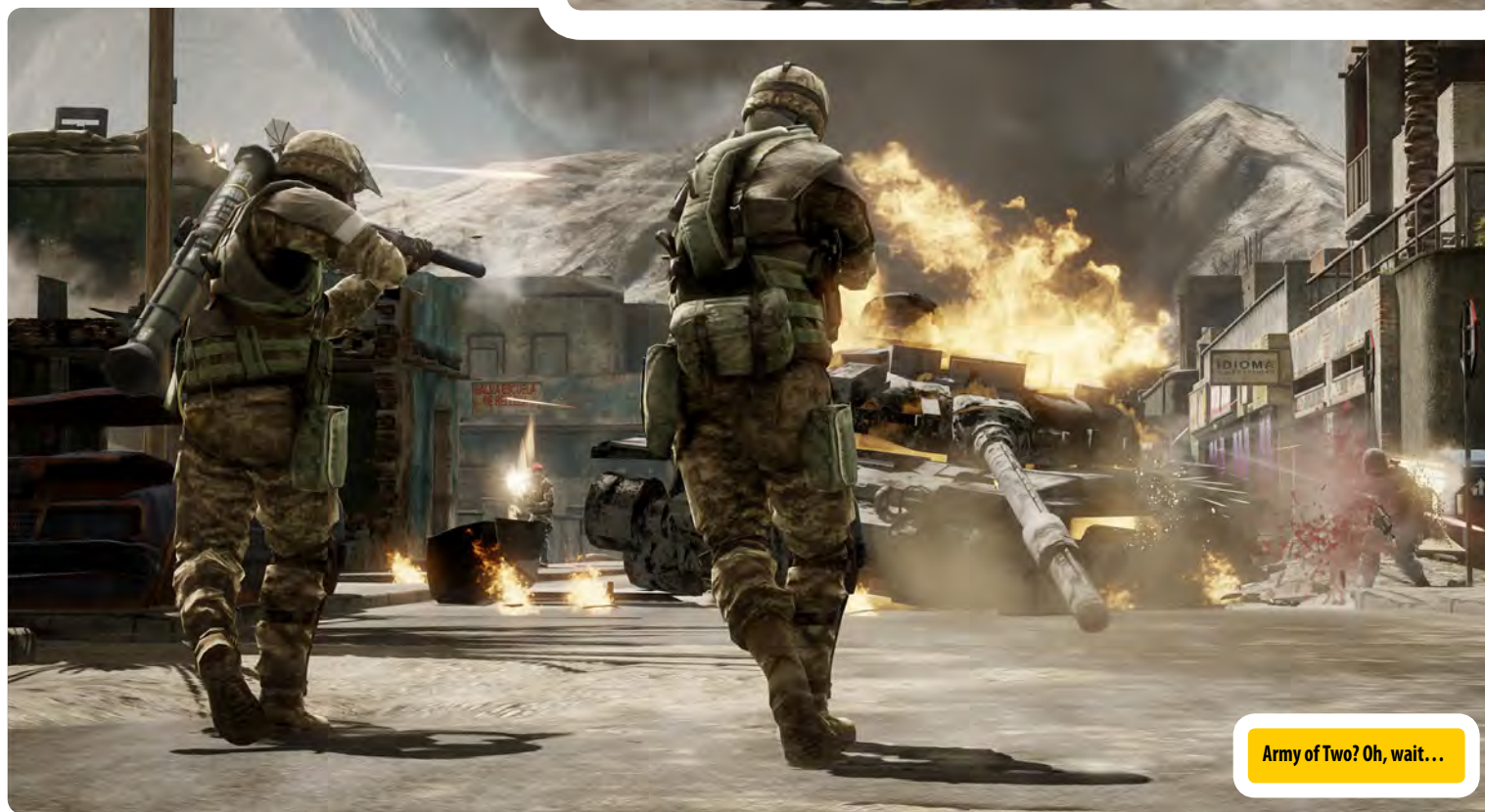
Battlefield: Bad Company 2

*Responding to the call of duty?*Working as a unit is
imperative to your success.**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Click here to
tell us what
you think of
Battlefield: Bad
Company 2

Where would we be today without Battlefield? Largely responsible for the introduction of a more co-operative concept into the online scene, the original Battlefield 1942 was the game of choice for many an online-enabled gamer in the early noughties, with its sublime and superbly balanced blend of class-based, territory-capture gameplay.

Of course, with the introduction of online FPS heavyweights Halo and Call of Duty we've come a long way since then, but rather than experiment unnecessarily, DICE is sticking to its guns for Bad Company 2, hoping to fight for its own space among the online world with its original recipe and, in its own words, 'Define Online Warfare'.

It's pretentious perhaps, but DICE's confidence is justifiable. Even with months still to go until its March release, Bad Company 2 feels polished and finely balanced, with



Army of Two? Oh, wait...

BATTLEFIELD
BAD COMPANY 2



Either he's been shot or he's just scored a goal. We imagine it's the former.



Firing from the rooftops is all well and good, but just be careful not to fall off...

> Bad Company 2 continued

the company's maturity and years of experience clearly on display.

We're introduced to Arica Harbour, a large, sprawling map filled with a handful of distinct regions, each home to key territorial strongholds. Playing in the game's Rush mode, each keypoint must be either defended or destroyed by either team, with defenders holding back oppressors using a variety of gun emplacements and substantial armoury. The attackers, on the other hand, have access to a slew of vehicles – from the nippy four-wheel drive personnel carrier to the M1 Abrams tank. Other vehicles, including the likes of helicopter gunships are also promised in other maps, each with their own upgrades. Losing control

"Playing in the game's Rush mode, each keypoint must be either defended or destroyed"

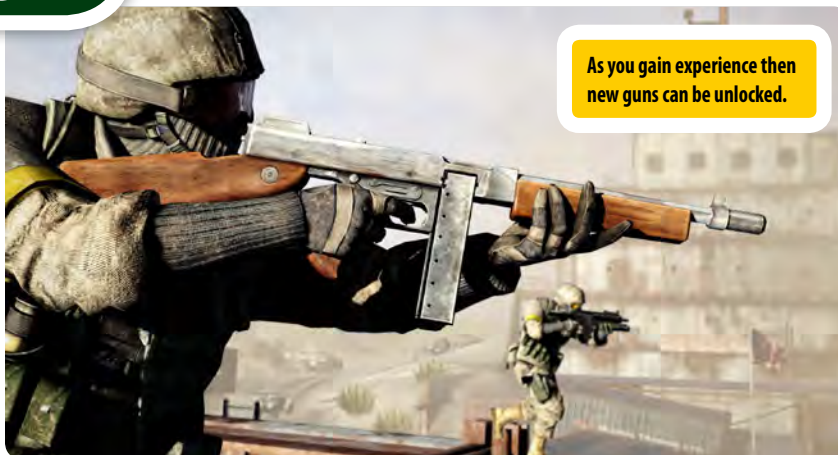
over territory forces the defenders to retreat, eventually being pushed all the way back to the shipping yard of Arica Harbour itself, dipping in-between buildings and shipping containers.

The battle is much slower-paced than Modern Warfare, with the struggle for power over the various control points resulting in battles lasting upwards of 20 minutes, while the ability to completely flatten buildings this time around also ensures that you're kept on your toes. Think

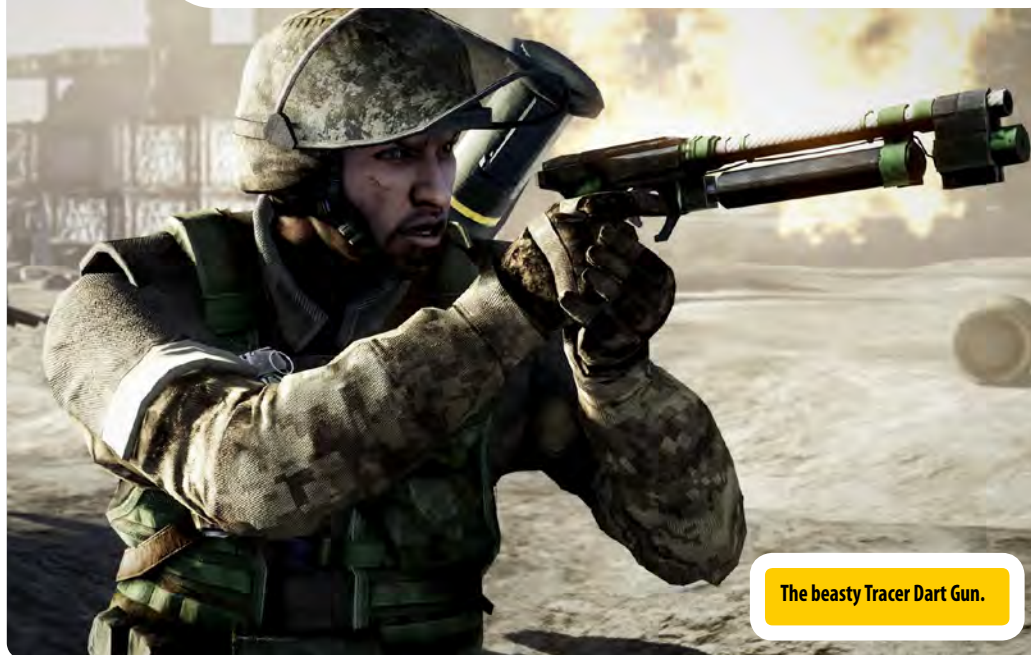


We'd rather be in the tank, personally.

BATTLEFIELD
BAD COMPANY 2



As you gain experience then new guns can be unlocked.



The beastly Tracer Dart Gun.

> Bad Company 2 continued

you've found a good camping spot in that warehouse? Just remember that it may not be there the next time you

spawn. But, despite the initial similarities between the two games – the setting, the weaponry, the experience points – it's this slower pace and sheer immensity of the maps that



Everyone rushing for the tank is, and likely always will be, a firm part of Battlefield's gameplay.

"This is a polished and addictive continuation of one of the most established online series' in videogame history"

is key to Battlefield distancing itself from the likes of Modern Warfare. Bad Company 2 is an arguably more tactical affair, where each player's input feels vital to the outcome of the mission, rather than simply being able to rely on one-man armies to achieve victory single-handedly. And whether that's playing as the engineer who

fixes vehicles, the rifleman who prefers to stick within a close-knit squad or the sniper that isolates himself atop a mountainside, there's something here for every type of FPS gamer to enjoy.

So will DICE be able to deliver on its claim of defining online warfare? Undeniably so. Bad Company 2 may not be an entirely different prospect to the last game, but it doesn't need to be. Instead, it's looking like a polished and addictive continuation of one of the most established online series' in videogame history – and our most anticipated online shooter of 2010. ●

360Zine
BATTLEFIELD
BAD COMPANY 2

HOW COMPLETE?

80%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

90%

Top Gun! Our most anticipated online shooter of 2010

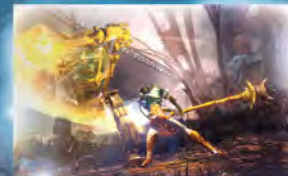
JAMES CAMERON'S

AVATAR

THE GAME



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



"LEAPS AND BOUNDS
AHEAD OF WHAT MOST
LICENSED MOVIE
GAMES OFFER"



04.12.2009

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CONTROL →





Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2



Publisher: Activision
Developer: Infinity Ward
Heritage: Call Of Duty,
CoD 4: Modern Warfare
Link: www.modernwarfare2.com
OUT NOW

Is the biggest always the best?

We've not really experienced anything like the Modern Warfare 2 launch in this industry before. Sure, we've had big games and big launches before, but few have had full-on London premieres with camouflaged carpets. Few have sparked price wars between supermarkets and stoked the right-

wing conservatives into heated parliamentary debate (more on this later). And none has ever sold 1.2 million copies in its first two days on sale in Britain. This is more than just a videogame. It's a cultural event.

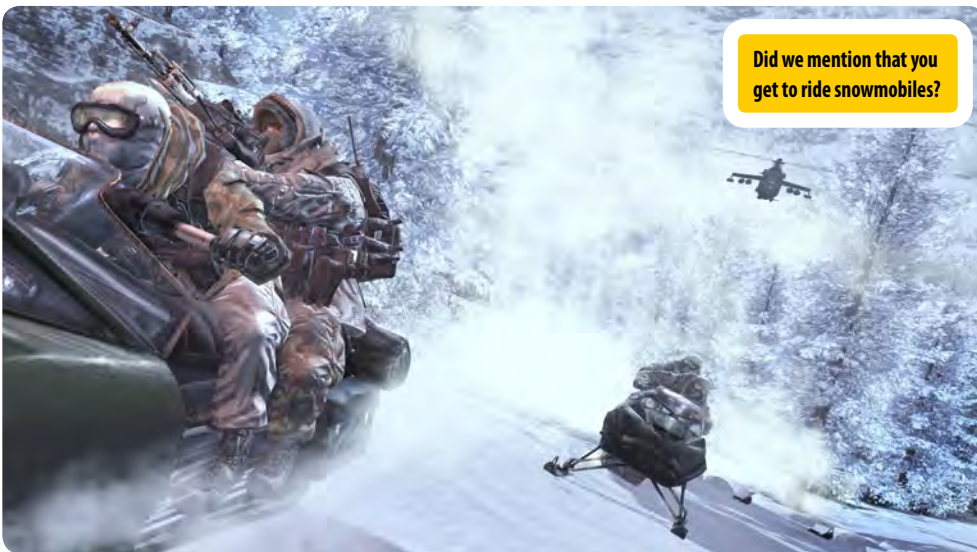
The thing is though, is all of this fuss actually worth it? After all, it's just a shooter, and the sixth iteration (not

Visually, Modern Warfare 2 is in the upper echelons of 360 titles. The particle effects and lighting are just incredible.

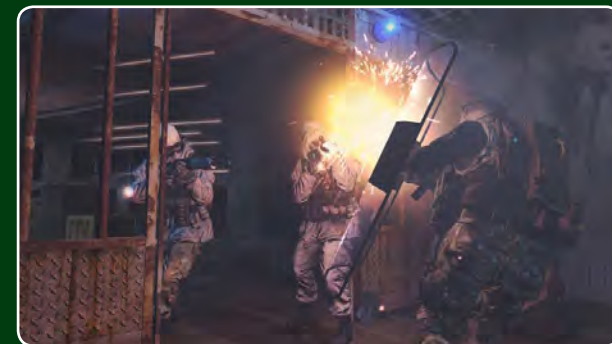
including spin-offs) in a well-worn franchise. Well, yes it is, but it's also the most complete and well-thought out triple-A package to hit consoles this year, and if there's a single soul who finds themselves disappointed, then they've probably not got their killstreaks configured properly.

Upon booting the game up, you're presented with three choices in a laudibly fuss-free menu. Campaign, multiplayer and the new co-op mode, Spec Ops. Most people will begin with the story mode, and so shall we. You already know what to expect – Infinity Ward has been honing its Hollywood-brand of rollercoaster FPS action for years now, and this is unquestionably its finest achievement. There's never a dull moment, never any real 'down time'. It's absolutely relentless, throwing immaculately orchestrated set pieces at you one after another after another, and filling the gaps with snappy, crisp shooting that is simultaneously

Did we mention that you get to ride snowmobiles?



SMALL CHANGES...
...can make huge differences



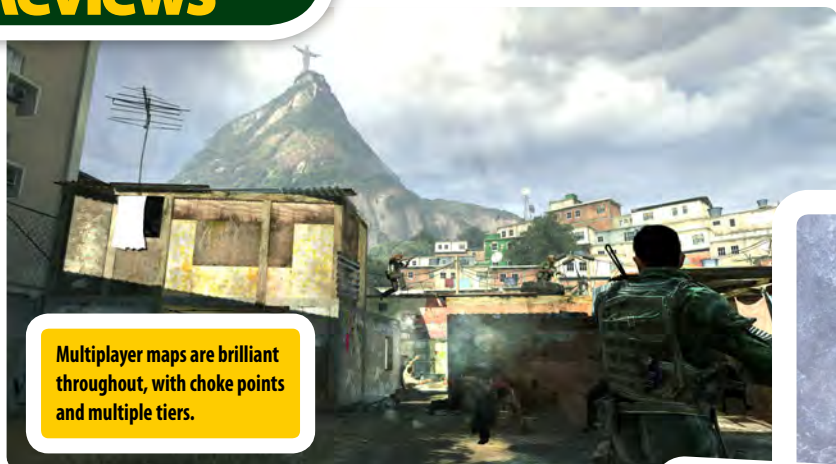
Shields up

Special friends

Killstreak time

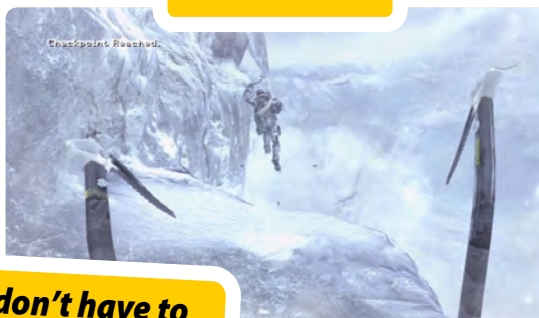
Shields up

At key moments in the single-player campaign – and throughout multiplayer – it's possible to get hold of a riot shield, which acts as portable cover. You only have access to a weak melee attack when shielded though, so it's a serious compromise to your attacking flair.



Multiplayer maps are brilliant throughout, with choke points and multiple tiers.

Some sections use clever mechanics to break up all the shooting. They're surprisingly effective.



> Modern Warfare 2 cont.

satisfying and strangely disturbing. And that's before we get to *that* scene.

Unless you've been trapped in a cave for the past few weeks, you would have at least heard reference to Modern Warfare 2's airport terminal shootout, 'No Russian'. You're a CIA agent, deep undercover with the game's terrorist death squad, and you're forced to walk through a Moscow terminal as your cohorts mercilessly slaughter hundreds of innocent people. You don't have to shoot – you can if you wish – but you do have to see their dying eyes and hear

"You don't have to shoot, but you do have to see their dying eyes and hear their screams"

their bloodcurdling screams. It's a shocking, provocative moment that serves not to glamorise violence, but to make players feel uncomfortable and actually repulsed. It's a landmark scene, and one that few people have chosen to play through again.

Whether it belongs in a game like Modern Warfare 2 is another debate,

simply because it suggests a deep, politically tense narrative, which Infinity Ward's game certainly does not have. In fact, by the latter stages, it makes even 24 looks positively sensible. This is all about the action and the spectacle, and it's incredibly successful at doing so. We're all for the power of videogames to make socio-political commentary, but Modern Warfare 2's message is somewhat mixed.

Focusing too heavily on this would be like picking holes in the texture of the game's buildings when Christ the

Redeemer is looming down on you in one of the most visually rich scenes in gaming history – the Favela shootout. It's far more worthwhile to discuss just how good Modern Warfare 2 is as a balls-out blast, a notion that's only amplified when you switch over to the twitch-fuelled depths of the multiplayer.

It's familiar, no doubt. Infinity Ward has chosen not to break an already winning formula, but the subtle tweaks to killstreaks, class-creation and weapon balancing, as well as a fantastic selection of maps, means that this is now the

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game one step at a time...



10 MINUTES

Single player? Multiplayer? Too many choices. Get into the drama or start the levelling-up grind?



1 HOUR

If you're playing the campaign, things should be pretty icy by now. Another great moment.



3 HOURS

Flitting between modes will extend their life, so that's probably worth doing. Enjoy it.



6 HOURS

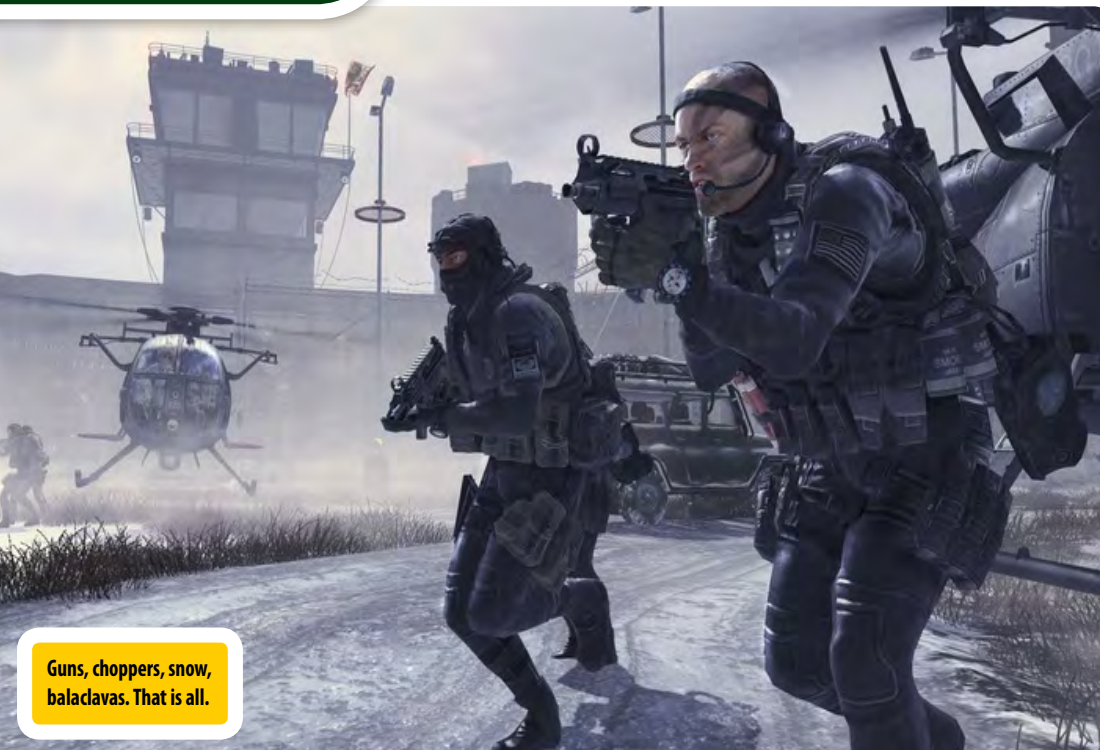
The campaign's wrapping up, and it's short-lived brilliance all the way through until the very end.



12 HOURS

Campaign's long gone, but if the thrill of multiplayer ever dies then we'll be amazed.





Guns, choppers, snow, balacavas. That is all.

Roll over screen for annotations



> Modern Warfare 2 cont.

premiere multiplayer shooter on a console. The way it rewards not only the elite but also the novice or the unskilled (more points for recovering from a streak of deaths, quick levelling rewards in the early stages) is a masterstroke. It's already had over two million players on 360 alone, and it's not hard to see why.

Final piece of the puzzle

The final piece of the Modern Warfare 2 puzzle comes in the form of Spec Ops, the dangerously compelling co-op mode, which encourages team work between two players to charge through tightly scripted scenarios. It awards stars for performance, difficulty and speed, and is a far better fit than any shoehorned co-op campaign would have been.

Overall, we should count ourselves lucky. Compared to other industries, videogames can be very reliable – our triple-A big budget releases are almost always of a supreme quality. You just can't say the same thing about movies. And when you've got a game as thrilling, spectacular and arresting as Modern Warfare 2, who needs to go to the cinema anyway. ●

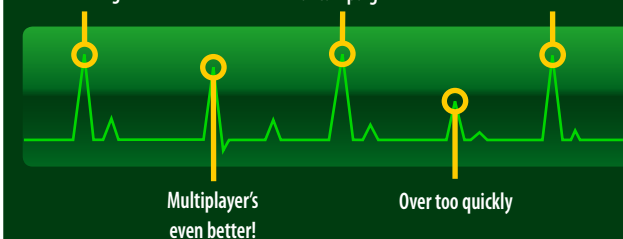


PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Single player is amazing!

Getting to the end of campaign

Spec Ops and multi forever!



360Zine Verdict

Utterly immense and dangerously compelling

- Incredible spectacle
- Infinite multiplayer
- Campaign too short?

94%

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Assassin's Creed 2

Publisher: Ubisoft

Developer:

Ubisoft Montreal

Heritage: Assassin's Creed

Link: www.assassins-creed.com
OUT NOW

Cracking The Da Vinci code

Assassin's Creed 2 is a game like no other. Throughout its twisting, tumultuous narrative, its often breathtaking virtual sightseeing tour and its violent, politically fuelled murder, Ubisoft Montreal's big-budget sequel feels less and less familiar; less and less comfortable. Not because of any glaring flaws in its design or

functionality though, simply because it was never obvious where it was going next. For a seasoned bunch of gamers, that's a strange feeling.

There was one niggling point that kept nagging away at us though, and it wasn't another game, but rather a film, the cinematic tour-de-force *There Will Be Blood*. In the same way that PT

"In many ways, it's a vibrant, gloriously successful piece of videogame art. And in others it's a bit of a trudge"

Free running is brilliantly liberating, but there's often someone in the way to ruin the fun.



ITALIAN STALLION

Ezio. He's quite the guy



She's a pro



Horse play



Stylin' and profilin'



She's a pro

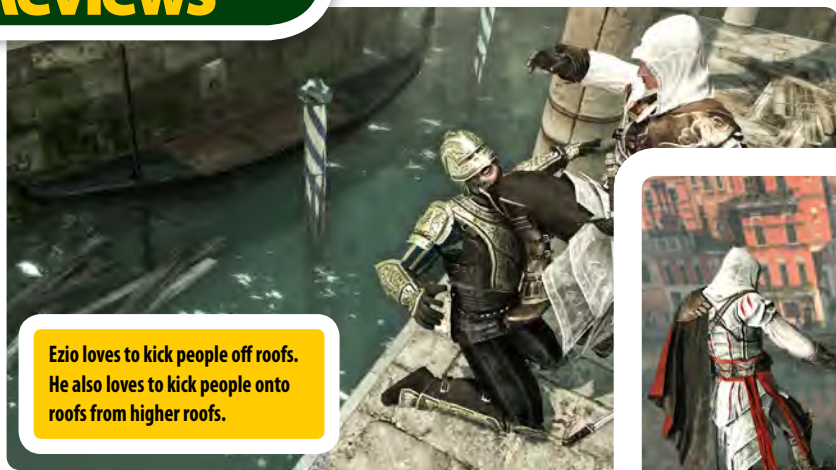
Ezio can use 'working girls' to blend into crowds and to distract any horny guards. Crafty.



Ezio may be a well-trained killer, but he's always got time for the ladies.

Anderson's mesmerising insight into the crazed mind of a oil tycoon felt dizzying to film buffs because it eschewed traditional notions of narrative pattern and pace, so too does Assassin's Creed 2. It's a game that's bold enough – sometimes to its detriment – to throw convention out of a stained-glass window and try to deliver something more ethereal and absorbing. In many ways, it's a vibrant, gloriously successful piece of videogame art. And in others it's a bit of a trudge.

The comparisons to film have to stop when it comes to Assassin's Creed 2's story, though. The actual yarn it spins is good, but the dialogue and delivery is certainly not. Bad Italian accents spout expositionally at one another in an all-too-serious and worthy manner, and after a while, you'll be crying out to be >



Ezio loves to kick people off roofs. He also loves to kick people onto roofs from higher roofs.

Hiring thieves is often a good way to escape the guards. You can hire all sorts of factions to aid your murderous quest.



"The sinister score suggests a darker, edgier battle is just around the corner"



> Assassin's Creed 2 cont.

let back into the city walls. Because that is where Assassin's Creed 2 belongs.

The 15th Century depiction of Italian renaissance is truly outstanding. The engine, a refined version of an already stellar piece of tech, throws beautifully rendered architecture around as if they were digitised sprites, and after a while it gets under your skin. You feel like you belong in this world; the way NPCs react to Ezio Auditore Da Firenze (your Assassin antihero), the way that historical figures have been brought to life to interact with, the way Jesper Kyd's

sinister score always suggests a darker, edgier battle is just around the corner.

And as soon as you feel yourself completely lost in an Italian daydream, Assassin's Creed 2 yanks the carpet out from underneath you and forces you to listen to Danny Wallace prattle on about a sci-fi war between the Templars and the Assassins. In one way it's horribly jarring, but in another it fits in with the

unusually unsettling tone. Like we said, this is a game like no other.

Of course, none of this would matter if the game's core had suffered. Thankfully, Ubisoft Montreal has listened to all of the criticism levelled at the original and delivered a far more varied take on the life of a career murderer. Instead of repeating the same few chores over and over to receive

information on a target, Assassin's Creed 2 never lets on just how and when you'll be sent on an actual assassination mission. Sometimes you'll be rounding up an army to fight, or setting up distractions throughout the city to aid a getaway. There's always something new, be it a clever mechanic, a combat technique or a beautiful building to clamber up. It's to the game's credit >

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game one step at a time...



10 MINUTES

Uh oh, it's Danny Wallace, and that guy can't act. This better get interesting soon...



1 HOUR

That's better. Less Wallace, more Florence. The visuals are genuinely incredible. Stunning.



4 HOURS

A tragedy has befallen your family, and it's time to reclaim the glory of the Auditore family.



9 HOURS

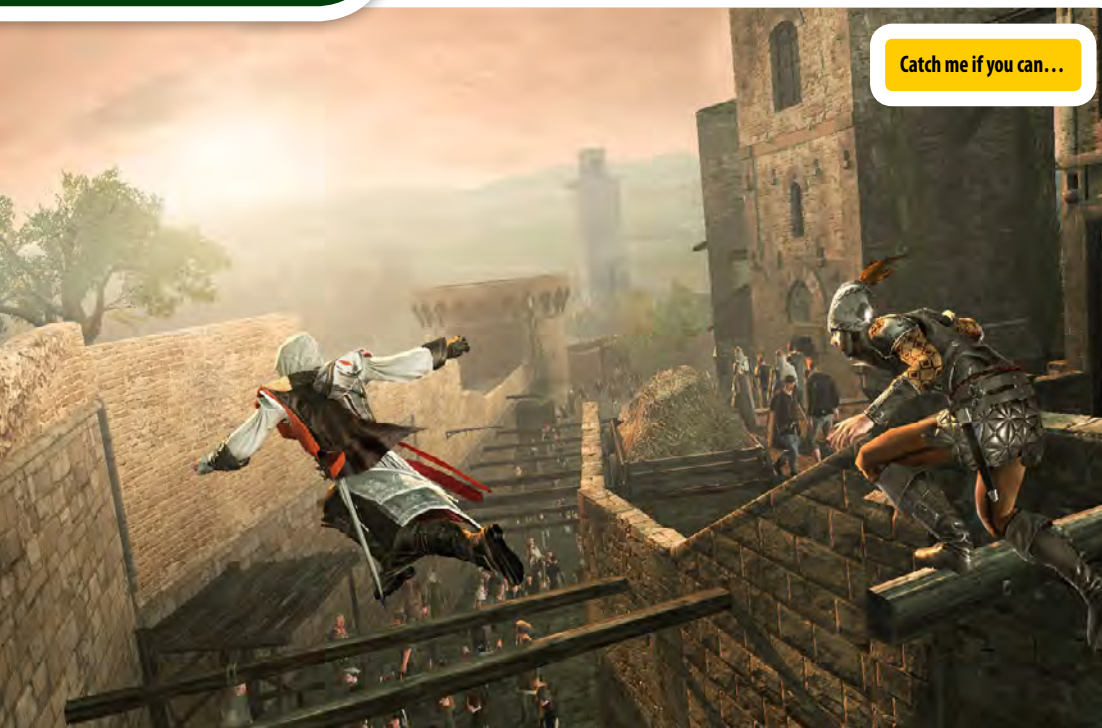
A few assassinations in and the pace has slowed. Is this it? Has the magic been lost?



14 HOURS

No! Into the final third of the game and everything picks up, including the difficulty level.





Catch me if you can...

Roll over screen for annotations



> Assassin's Creed 2 cont.

that even during a turgid middle section where repetition does finally creep in, the promise of discovering something fresh is more than enough to drive you towards the finish line.

Perhaps the greatest thrill of all, though, is the free running, which has received just enough refinement to make it feel that much more liberating. It's tougher now, and the penalties for dropping 20 feet onto your poor ankles are more severe, so the joy of actually bounding across the rooftops is amplified by the tension of potential free-falling failure.

The thrill of the kill is greater than before, too. Combat is largely unchanged – still counter and timing based – but it's the satisfaction that comes from finally plunging your blade into the soft flesh of your target that makes all the hard work seem worthwhile. You never know what form the assassination missions will take, but none are disappointing.

So, a beautifully made sequel. One that challenges us both cerebrally and digitally, yet one whose stubbornness to stick to its guns and not follow the pack sometimes proves its downfall. There are times where Assassin's Creed 2 feels like an arduous slog and a pretentious history lesson, but these times are short, and the game itself is not.

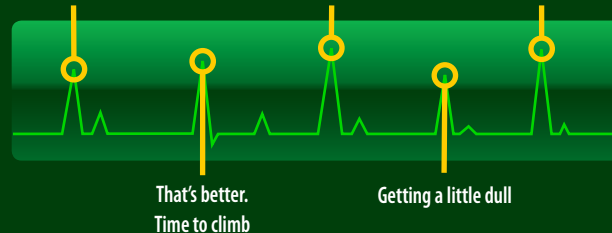
This is a stunning achievement, whose slight flaws do not spoil its enthralling theatre of brutality. Forza Auditore. Forza Italia. ●

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Uh oh, it's
Danny Wallace

Beautiful,
dangerous, violent

Triumphant final
few chapters



360Zine Verdict

*Beautiful, dizzying and
bold, but not perfect*

Incredibly good-looking

Far more variety than before

Some very dull moments

88%

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**Publisher:**

Rockstar Games

Developer: Rockstar North**Heritage:** GTA IV**Link:** www.rockstargames.com/theballadofgaytony**OUT NOW**

GTA IV: The Ballad of Gay Tony

Think pink...

There's a small group of people who like to complain about Grand Theft Auto IV. These are the folks who've chosen to ignore its delicately interwoven storylines, its incredible level of rich detail and the biting satire that courses through its immaculately rendered veins.

Instead, they clamour for a crazier Liberty City, one that allows players to let loose with jetpacks and parachutes

– the San Andreas brigade, you could call them. In many ways, The Ballad of Gay Tony is for them. While jetpacks are still out, you can now skydive, you can drive tanks, you can pilot a rocket-launching helicopter and you can even have sex in a toilet... This is all about the wilder side of Liberty City.

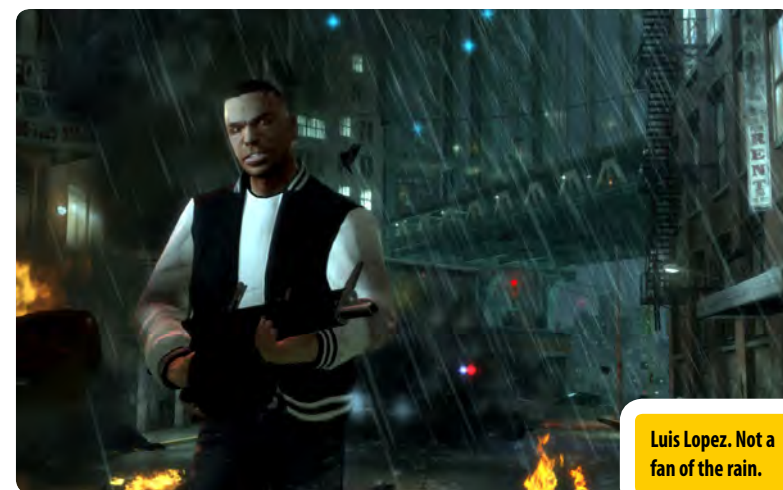
As you're probably already aware, you don't actually play as Gay Tony, but rather his bodyguard, the cautiously



pessimistic Luis Lopez. The eponymous Tony Prince (your boss) is a nightclub impresario who owns two clubs in Algonquin, and whose penchant for the finer things in life has got him in trouble with some seriously shady characters. As is the way in GTA, the people with the most money often have the least sense, so it's up to Luis to clean up Tony's mess.

Unlike GTA IV though (and even The Lost And Damned to an extent), The Ballad of Gay Tony isn't a rags to riches tale. The opening mission sees you driving a gorgeous car, hanging out in a club, throwing back shots, before getting involved in a shootout using prime-grade military hardware. Everything in Tony Prince's world screams excess, and it screams it in neon-pink lettering across the sky.

Obviously, this is still GTA IV, so don't expect a massive change in how the game actually handles – it's still all about weighty, Euphoria-driven character models, a highly refined driving system and hilarious

**Luis Lopez. Not a fan of the rain.**

LIFE IN LIBERTY CITY

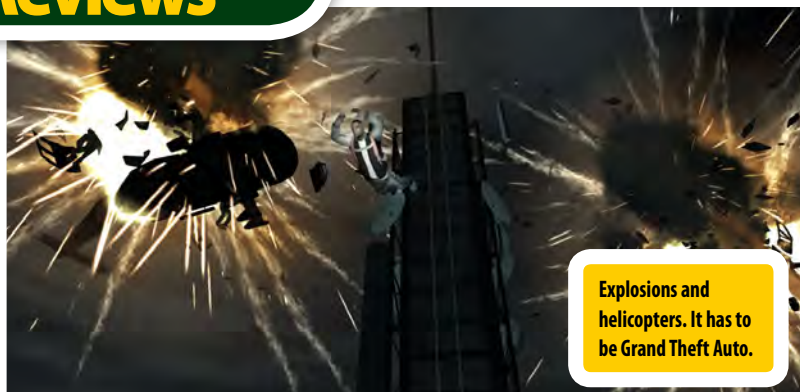
Enjoying the finer things in life...

**Partners in crime****Tanks for the memory****Back to basics**

Partners in crime

Tony and Luis are definitely an odd couple. We think that there's some latent sexual tension going on there...





Explosions and helicopters. It has to be Grand Theft Auto.



Skydiving is immense fun.



The skyline is still hugely impressive.



Lopez has a keen eye for the ladies. And toilets...

> GTAIV: TBoGT continued

counterculture satire at every turn. Instead, it's best to concentrate on who you meet and what they get you to do.

Take Yusuf, for example, the Middle-Eastern playboy brilliantly voiced by portly comic Omid Djalili. He's the humour in The Ballad of Gay Tony, and his utter contempt for the rational is undoubtedly the story's highlight. Yusuf is the guy that has you jumping out of choppers and riding on the tops of trains, normally because he wants to improve his bizarre theme park back in the Middle East.

With a good 10 hours of story to play through again, The Ballad of Gay Tony perfectly reflects Rockstar's commitment to the GTA IV universe and the value it wants to give to the

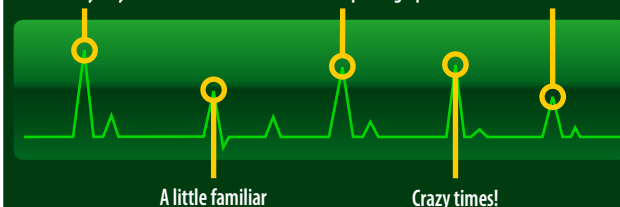
"This perfectly reflects Rockstar's commitment to GTA"

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Good to be back in Liberty City

Missions are picking up

The end of GTA IV



consumer. This is a fitting swansong to one of gaming's finest ever narratives, and adds depth and texture in a way that no other medium could match. So thanks Rockstar North. Liberty City has been a pleasure. ●

QUICKFIRE QUIZ

360Zine Verdict

Amazing value, great characters and insane missions. Lovely



Amazing value



Craziness in Liberty City



Still more GTA IV

90%





Borderlands

We'll need guns. Lots of guns...

It's tough to be a shooter in 2009. Avoiding both Modern Warfare 2 and Halo 3 ODST isn't exactly easy if you also want to get noticed. Good job then, that Gearbox decided to throw its original template for Borderlands in the bin and come back with an out-there art direction and a seriously in-your-face ad campaign. It's pretty difficult to avoid that sort of audiovisual onslaught.

Good job indeed, because missing out on a game with the confidence and quality of Borderlands would be a shame for anyone invested in the FPS genre. It's a sprawling epic, focused almost entirely

around the collection of loot from the bodies of your fallen enemies, and about as anarchically charged as mainstream games get. It really isn't like anything else.

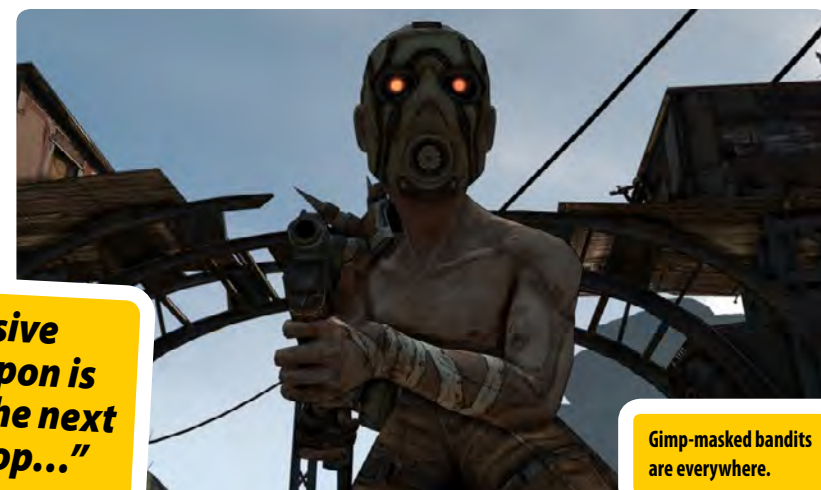
The loot in question, beyond ammo and health, is the key to Borderlands' success. The game randomly generates weaponry for you, combining colours, stats, features and, of course, ammunition types to create true one-of-a-kind weapons. And what weapons. Flame-throwing shotguns, lighting-bolt assault rifles – there's even an automatic rocket launcher if you're lucky enough to stumble across it. The

"That elusive perfect weapon is just around the next rocky outcrop..."

quest for newer and better guns is the driving force that powers you through Borderlands' twisted Western theatre, always prompting one more side quest out of you; always promising that elusive perfect weapon just around the next rocky outcrop.

Which is just as well, as without such a powerful draw, Borderlands might suffer. As a straight shooter, it lags behind its open-world cousins – it has neither the subtlety or intelligence of, say, Far Cry 2, nor the role-playing depth of Fallout 3. The opening hours are spent walking back and forth between quest givers, slaughtering rat-like monsters called Skags and generally getting somewhat fed up with the world. It's only when the weapons start coming thick and fast that things begin to pick up.

Thankfully, the shooting itself is punchy and enjoyable. Even though the enemy AI is barely more advanced than Doom's, there's a frantic need for speed, accuracy and skill whenever you're set upon, which will be regularly. It's closest resemblance is actually Halo,



Gimp-masked bandits are everywhere.

BODY SHOP

Chop 'til you drop...



Weapon of choice

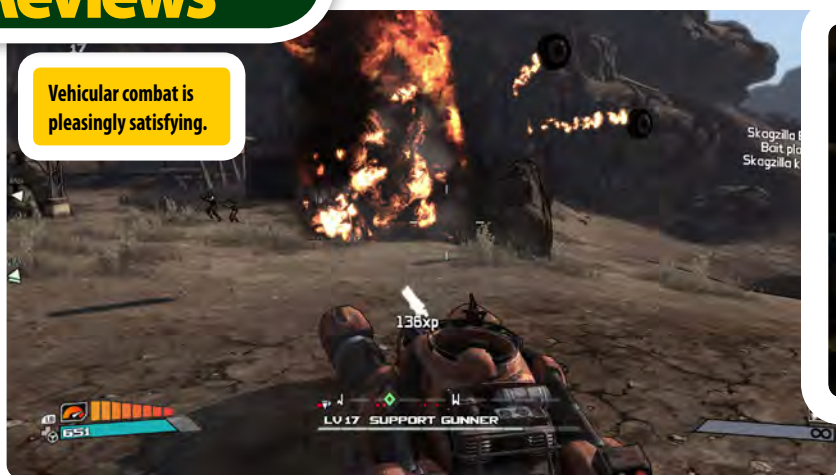
Bloody hell

Play together, kill as one

Weapon Of Choice

At the current count, there are over 17,500,000 weapon combinations in Borderlands. It's a looter's dream.





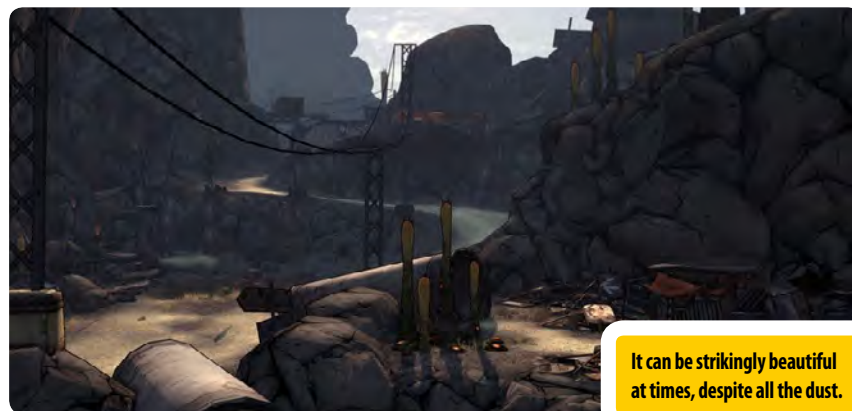
Vehicular combat is pleasingly satisfying.



Tartan-clad gimp bandits? Sounds utterly terrifying.



The choice of visual style works well for the story.



It can be strikingly beautiful at times, despite all the dust.

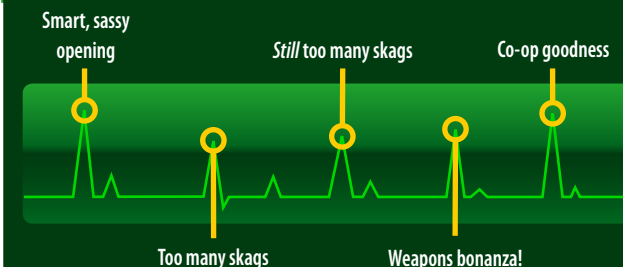
> Borderlands continued

purely because there's such a need to be aware of your surroundings and able to react. It even brings a new mechanic to the shooter fold – Last Stand, whereby even after losing all of your health, one last kill will award you a boost so you can keep on fighting. Against some of the later stages' leviathan enemies, there's high drama in every battle.

A shame then, that the repetitive trudges between these explosive high-points get more tiresome as the game goes on. The art style may be striking – even beautiful at times – but there's only so much rock and dust anyone can look at before crying out for a bit of vegetation. Having co-op buddies in tow helps alleviate the grind, but ultimately it's only the quest for

"As a piece of entertainment, it's hugely original"

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



bigger, better and more badass guns that keeps Borderlands going.

Don't underestimate it though. It's an intoxicating, zombiefying draw. In fact, we're off to find some more. Let us know what you find. ●

QUICKFIRE QUIZ

**360Zine
Verdict**

Compulsive in the extreme, but too patchy for greatness

- Anarchic charm
- Brilliant loot system
- Slow in parts

81%

MASS EFFECT 2

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